

Genus PROSOPIS.

Prosopis mixtus.

Female (length $2\frac{1}{4}$ lines) black; the clypeus cream-coloured; the tubercles and tegulæ white; the wings white, hyaline; all the tarsi pale ferruginous; the pubescence on the posterior legs white; the margins of the abdominal segments testaceous; the disk of the thorax is very smooth and shining.

Hab. Ind.

Although I have placed this insect in the genus *Prosopis*, I do not feel quite satisfied that it belongs to it; in the neuration of the wings it exactly corresponds with that genus. I cannot examine the tongue, and the specimen described is much mutilated and gummed to a piece of card, and is altogether in bad condition. I have described it, believing it to be an *Hyleus*, as it is to me a new habitat for the genus.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES.

A Naturalist's Sojourn in Jamaica. By P. H. GOSSE. 1851. 12mo. Longman and Co.

THERE are perhaps few parts of the world of whose natural productions we know less than those of our own West Indian Colonies. At first sight this may appear rather surprising, considering the number of Europeans constantly residing in those beautiful islands; but as most of these regard the old country as their home, and their sojourn in the West Indies only as a means of making money, they are still, as in the time of Bancroft, "more attentive to the acquisition of wealth than natural knowledge." Occasionally indeed some clergyman or medical man does pay a little attention to the natural objects which surround him; but the number of these exceptions is but small, whilst few of them ever do more for the preservation and publication of their observations than the insertion of a notice of some remarkable occurrence in one of the innumerable 'St. George's Chronicles' or 'Kingston Gazettes,' or an occasional article in one of those red-covered almanacs, which, to European eyes, have such a curiously exotic appearance.

The natural history of Jamaica has once or twice engaged the attention of naturalists and been made the subject of a special treatise, but much remained to be done,—how much, the present delightful volume, the result, or rather part of the result, of a "sojourn" of only nineteen months in the island, will abundantly show.

Mr. Gosse is too well known as an acute observer of nature, and his reputation as an agreeable writer is too well established, to leave much doubt in the minds of our readers that a book from his pen on the natural history of Jamaica, perhaps the most beautiful of tropical islands, will contain an abundance both of information and entertain-

ment, and we believe we cannot do better, either for our readers or Mr. Gosse, than by letting that gentleman speak for himself.

Speaking of Lizards (p. 74), he says—

“One feature with which a stranger cannot fail to be struck on his arrival in the island, and which is essentially tropical, is the abundance of the lizards that everywhere meet his eye. As soon as ever he sets foot on the beach, the rustlings among the dry leaves, and the dartings hither and thither among the spiny bushes that fringe the shore, arrest his attention* ; and he sees on every hand the beautifully coloured and meek-faced Ground Lizard (*Ameiva dorsalis*) scratching like a bird among the sand, or peering at him from beneath the shadow of a great leaf, or creeping stealthily along with its chin and belly upon the earth, or shooting over the turf with such a rapidity that it seems to fly rather than run. By the roadsides and in the open pastures, and in the provision-grounds of the negroes, still he sees this elegant and agile lizard ; and his prejudices against the reptile races must be inveterate indeed, if he can behold its gentle countenance, and timid but bright eyes, its chaste but beautiful hues, its graceful form and action, and its bird-like motions, with any other feeling than admiration.

“As he walks along the roads and lanes that divide the properties, he will perceive at every turn the smooth and trim little figures of the Wood-slaves (*Mabouya agilis*), basking on the loose stones of the dry walls ; their glossy fish-like scales glistening in the sun with metallic brilliance. They lie as still as if asleep ; but on the intruder’s approach they are ready in a moment to dart into the crevices of the stones and disappear until the danger is past.

“If he looks into the outbuildings of the estates, the mill-house, or the boiling-house, or the cattle-sheds, a singular croaking sound above his head causes him to look up ; and then he sees clinging to the rafters, or crawling sluggishly along with the back downward, three or four lizards, of form, colour, and action very diverse from those he has seen before. It is the Gecko, or Croaking Lizard (*Thecadactylus lævis*), a nocturnal animal in its chief activity, but always to be seen in these places, or in hollow trees, even by day. Its appearance is repulsive, I allow, but its reputation for venom is libellous and groundless.

“The stranger walks into the dwelling-house. Lizards, lizards, still meet his eye. The little Anoles (*A. iodurus*, *A. opalinus*, &c.) are chasing each other in and out between the jalousies, now stopping to protrude from the throat a broad disk of brilliant colour, crimson or orange, like the petal of a flower, then withdrawing it, and again displaying it in coquettish play. Then one leaps a yard or two through the air, and alights on the back of his playfellow ; and both struggle and twist about in unimaginable contortions. Another is running up and down on the plastered wall, catching the ants as they roam in black lines over its whited surface ; and another leaps from the top of some piece of furniture upon the back of the visitor’s

* “Nunc virides etiam occultant spineta lacertos.”—VIRG.

chair, and scampers nimbly along the collar of his coat. It jumps on the table;—can it be the same? An instant ago it was of the most beautiful golden green, except the base of the tail, which was of a soft, light, purple hue: now, as if changed by an enchanter's wand, it is of a sordid sooty brown all over, and becomes momentarily darker and darker, or mottled with dark and pale patches of a most unpleasing aspect. Presently, however, the mental emotion, whatever it was, anger, or fear, or dislike, has passed away, and the lovely green hue sparkles in the glancing sunlight as before.

“He lifts the window-sash; and instantly there run out on the sill two or three minute lizards of a new kind, allied to the Gecko, the common Palette-tip (*Sphæroidactylus Argus*). It is scarcely more than 2 inches long, more nimble than fleet in its movements, and not very attractive.

“In the woods he would meet with other kinds. On the trunks of the trees he might frequently see the Venus (*Dactyloa Edwardsii*), as it is provincially called; a lizard much like the Anoles of the houses, of a rich grass-green colour, with orange throat-disk, but much larger and fiercer: or in the eastern parts of the island the great Iguana (*Cyclura lophoma*), with its dorsal crest like the teeth of a saw running all down its back, might be seen lying out on the branches of the trees, or playing bo-peep from a hole in the trunk: or in the swamps and morasses of Westmoreland the yellow Galliwasp (*Celestus occiduus*), so much dreaded and abhorred, yet without reason, might be observed sitting idly in the mouth of its burrow, or feeding on the wild fruits and marshy plants that constitute its food.”

As might be expected from this extract, the natural history of the lizards forms a very important portion of Mr. Gosse's work, which accordingly contains many interesting observations on this somewhat despised class of animals, including a long and valuable communication from the author's friend, Mr. Hill, on the Alligator or native Crocodile. Let us turn now to a class more generally attractive, and see one of the most beautiful of the feathered inhabitants of the air in a state of nature:—

“While I was up in the calabash-tree,” says Mr. Gosse (p. 48), “engaged in detaching the bunches of *Oncidium*, the beautiful Long-tailed Humming-bird (*Trochilus polytmus*) came shooting by, with its two long velvet-black feathers fluttering like streamers behind it, and began to suck at the blossoms of the tree in which I was. Quite regardless of my presence, consciously secure in its power of wing, the lovely little gem hovered around the trunk, and threaded the branches, now probing here, now there, its cloudy wings on each side vibrating with a noise like that of a spinning-wheel, and its emerald breast for a moment flashing brilliantly in the sun's ray; then apparently black, all the light being absorbed; then, as it slightly turned, becoming a dark olive; then in an instant blazing forth again with emerald effulgence. Several times it came close to me, as I sat motionless with delight, and holding my breath for fear of alarming it and driving it away; it seemed almost worth a voyage across the sea to

behold so radiant a creature in all the wildness of its native freedom."

With one more extract, also relating to birds, we must conclude our notice of this interesting book; it is headed—*Voices of early Birds*:—

"April 29th.—I rose some hours before the sun, and proceeded to the Peaks of Bluefields. Passing through the wooded pastures and grass-pieces of Pinnock-Shafton, I was interested in the voices of 'earliest birds.' While as yet no indication of day appeared over the dark mountain, no ruddy tinge streamed along the east; while Venus was blazing like a lamp, and shedding as much light as a young moon, as she climbed up the clear dark heaven among her fellow-stars;—the Piramidigs or Nightjars were unusually vociferous, and careering in great numbers; they flew low, as I could perceive by listening to their sounds, but were utterly undistinguishable to the sight from the darkness of the sky across which they flitted in their angular traverses. Presently the Flat-bill uttered his plaintive wail, occasionally relieved by a note rather less mournful. When the advancing light began to break over the black and frowning peaks, and Venus waned, the Peadove commenced from the neighbouring woods her fivefold coo, hollow and moaning. Then the Petchary cackled his three or four rapid notes; and from a distant wooded hill, as yet shrouded in darkness, proceeded the rich, mellow, but broken song of the Hopping Dick. Now the whole east was ruddy, and the rugged points and trees on the summit of the mountain-ridge, interrupting the flood of crimson light, produced the singularly beautiful phenomenon of a series of rose-coloured beams, diverging from the eastern quarter, and spreading like an expanded fan across the whole arch of heaven, each ray dilating as it advanced. Then mocking-birds all around broke into song, pouring forth their rich gushes and powerful bursts of melody, filling the ear, and overpowering all the other varied voices, which now helped to swell the morning concert of awakening birds."

In another passage, Mr. Gosse has well refuted the erroneous idea that the birds and flowers of the tropics are destitute of song and scent, and furnished us with a long list of marked exceptions to this so-called rule; whilst in many other places, in descriptions of the various scenes in which his researches were carried on, he has communicated a great deal of information on tropical vegetation which will be exceedingly interesting to the botanist. A considerable number of new species of animals are described in various places, some of them illustrated by coloured figures, and the work is also adorned with views of several of the scenes described: it is certainly a most interesting and valuable addition to our stock of information on tropical natural history.

In conclusion, however, we cannot but express our regret, that Mr. Gosse should have allowed himself to fall into the common cant of *soi-disant* field-naturalists in speaking against all branches of natural history except their own. We should have thought that one who in his own department can work so well, might have rested his claim to be regarded as a naturalist on the merits of his works, without re-

sorting to any illiberal depreciation of the equally valuable labours of others. And indeed, without the assistance of these despised *closet-naturalists*, what would the works of Mr. Gosse and other field-naturalists become?—a mere chaos! a mass of inextricable confusion! Mr. Gosse may rest assured, that other and far higher powers than those of the mere observer are required by those who endeavour to bring the disjointed materials furnished by field-naturalists and species-describers into something like order,—to make them subservient to the progress of science towards its true object, the development of our knowledge of the system of nature. “*This is natural history.*”

Man and his Migrations. By R. G. LATHAM, M.D., F.R.S. &c. Van Voorst, 1851, fc. 8vo, pp. 250.

The Ethnology of the British Colonies and Dependencies. By R. G. LATHAM, Esq., M.D. &c. London: Van Voorst, 1851, fc. 8vo, pp. 264.

Few things testify more strongly to the contracted views and the want of philosophic insight, which result from the systems of education generally adopted in this country, than the excessive estimation of ‘practical’ science, as it is termed, in contradistinction to that form of inquiry which is content to go forward in the simple hope of discovering truth, with the purpose of bringing the laws regulating all cosmical phænomena into the domain of human knowledge. That short-sightedness which approves only of the pursuit of trains of investigation likely to result speedily in the acquisition of means of increasing material wealth, may be pardoned in the uneducated, whose sole conceptions of science are derived from the vague impressions made upon their minds by the astonishing applications of abstract theory now so abundantly met with in all civilized communities; but to those who have the opportunity of knowing the history of human progress in any one department, it cannot be pardoned that they should shut their eyes to the universal fact of ‘practical’ value being a quality which science can only exhibit in an advanced stage of its cultivation; and further, it may be assumed that they have but a very imperfect idea of the nature and object of human endowments, who do not recognize that that power of cultivating intellect necessarily involves a corresponding amount of duty.

The most satisfactory signs of a more liberal tone, of a more comprehensive spirit in the exercise of thought, are furnished by the growing interest among educated persons generally in those departments of knowledge which are conversant with the progressive changes of the earth and its inhabitants. And it would seem as though physical science, not content with its own wonderful development, had pressed over into the domain of moral science, disturbing history in its endless coiling inward upon itself, and was striving to wrest from it facts which were once its undisputed property, to build a new science of progress upon them. It is however the ‘method’ which leads us to this fancy; the real case is that a new science has grown up, in which physical science and history go hand in hand in